

Jonathan L. Israel

Partner

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Jonathan Israel is an experienced sports and labor & employment attorney, advising and litigating for clients on a wide variety of traditional labor and general employment matters. He is a partner and co-chair of the firm's Sports & Entertainment Group, representing clients in diverse industries, including professional and collegiate sports, esports, entertainment, media, financial services, hedge and private equity funds, manufacturing, and retail.

Jon represents sports industry and other corporate clients in matters involving equal employment litigation & counseling, wage and hour litigation & counseling, worker misclassification, restrictive covenants & trade secrets, employment contracts and separation agreements, federal and state agency investigations (e.g., Department of Labor), labor and employment issues in corporate transactions, WARN Act, and ERISA & employee benefits.

As the sports industry continues to evolve, Jon is assisting clients with novel legal issues and emerging areas. He launched and manages the firm's College Sports: NIL Task Force, representing colleges, universities, and collectives as they navigate the legal issues involved in the commercialization of student-athletes' names, image, and likeness. Additionally, he advises companies in the area of esports on employment issues related to investment and M&A activity in this space.

Jon also handles traditional labor law matters such as negotiating and administering collective bargaining agreements, including in professional sports and entertainment industries and in connection with corporate transactions and bankruptcy cases. He has arbitrated grievances and disputes, including for the professional sports leagues and teams in connection with player discipline, contract disputes, and salary arbitration, and for various corporate employers in connection with the enforcement of collective bargaining agreements and work rules and litigates labor-management disputes before courts and the National Labor Relations Board.

Previously, Jon was assistant general counsel at the National Basketball Association where he served as in-house counsel to the NBA and its affiliated entities and teams on labor and employment, litigation, and general corporate matters.

Representative Experience*

- *Upshaw v. Detroit Pistons Basketball Co.* (E.D. Mich.) (represented NBA team in tort action)
- *Krystal C. v. New York Jets, LLC* (N.J. Super. Ct.) (successfully managed putative wage/hour class action brought by former team cheerleaders)
- *Action Ink v. New York Jets, LLC* (E.D. La.) (obtained summary judgment for NFL team in a trademark infringement action involving the team's use of the phrase "Ultimate Fan"), *aff'd* (5th Cir.)
- *Thompson v. WNBA* (S.D.N.Y.) (obtained dismissal of fraud action by former head coach and general manager of the Houston Comets)
- Major U.S. university and athletic department (represented university in employment discrimination litigation brought by former coach)
- Multiple college sports "collectives" (advising on contractual and operational matters concerning the commercialization of the name, image, and likeness ("NIL") rights of college athletes)
- Professional sports leagues and teams (advising on issues relating to team medical staff operations)
- Professional sports teams and colleges (negotiating executive and coaching contracts)
- Industry-Leading Esports & Video Gaming Company (advise company on proposed investment and commercial transactions with leading music and entertainment company)
- Industry-Leading Multi-Game Esports Team (prepare, negotiate, and analyze professional player, staff, and influencer contracts, including for North American League of Legends Championship Series)
- *In re Palumbo (New York Life Insurance Co.)* (N.Y. DOL Appeal Board) (obtained reversal of agency decision classifying independent agent as employee)
- *Grenawalt v. AT&T Mobility, LLC* (S.D.N.Y.) (obtained summary judgment and dismissal of putative FLSA and New York state law collective and class action for unpaid overtime wages)
- *Newton-Haskoor v. Coface North America* (D.N.J.) (obtained dismissal of sex discrimination and whistleblower claims against client), *aff'd* (3d Cir.)
- *Coface Collections North America v. Newton* (D. Del.) (obtained preliminary injunction enforcing non-compete and other restrictive covenants against former president and seller of business acquired by client), *aff'd* (3d Cir.)
- *Mohamed v. Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc.* (FINRA arbitration) (obtained arbitration panel award denying former employee's action against client for fraud, breach of contract, and wrongful termination)

* Matters handled prior to joining Foley.

Awards and Recognition

- Recognized, *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business* both in Sports Law and in Esports (2021-2024)
- Recognized, *The Best Lawyers in America*®

- Litigation – Labor and Employment (2020-2024)
- Sports Law (2023)
- Recognized, *The Legal 500 United States*

Affiliations

- Member, Sports Lawyers Association

Sectors

- Digital Assets, Web3 & NFTs
- Innovative Technology
- Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs)
- Sports & Entertainment

Practice Areas

- Direct Selling & Multi-Level Marketing
- FTC Consumer Protection
- Health Care in Sports
- Labor & Employment
- Litigation
- State Attorneys General

Education

- Columbia Law School (J.D.)
 - Recipient, Harlan Fiske Stone Scholarship
- Harvard University (B.S., cum laude)

Admissions

- New York
- New Jersey